

Message Text

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ACTION EUR-12

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 PM-04 SP-02 CIAE-00 INR-07 NSAE-00
PA-01 USIA-06 PRS-01 OES-06 ACDA-07 L-03 EB-07 DOTE-00
FMC-01 /058 W

-----231856Z 109357 /54

R 231315Z DEC 76
FM AMCONSUL PONTA DELGADA
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 1581
INFO AMEMBASSY LISBON
AMCONSUL OPORTO
USMISSION NATO
COMUSFORAZ
USCINCEUR
CINCLANT
DIA WASHDC
USNMR SHAPE BRUSSELS

C O N F I D E N T I A L PONTA DELGADA 0507

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PFOR, PINT, PO, FR
SUBJ: AZOREAN DEVELOPMENTS

REF: PONTA DELGADA 0473 (DTG 211605Z NOV 76) (NOTAL)

1. FRENCH BASE NEGOTIATIONS: THE LOCAL PRESS REPORTS THAT THE GOP CONVERSATIONS WITH THE FRENCH GOVERNMENT ON THE BASE ON FLORES HAVE ENDED. THE DRAFT AGREEMENT PRODUCED MUST NOW BE APPROVED BY BOTH GOVERNMENTS. IN EXCHANGE FOR THE RIGHT TO INSTALL EQUIPMENT TO MEASURE THE TRAJECTORY OF BALLISTIC MISSILES, THE FRENCH AGREED TO BUILD A PORT AND TO INCREASE THE ELECTRICAL GENERATING CAPACITY ON FLORES, TO IMPROVE THE WATER AND SANITATION SYSTEMS ON FLORES AND SANTA MARIA AND TO PROVIDE ASSISTANCE IN FISHING. PRIVATELY, REGIONAL PRESIDENT, MOTA AMARAL COMMENTED HE WAS PLEASED WITH THE OUTCOME OF THE CONVERSATIONS, PARTICULARLY SINCE ALL THE BENEFITS UNDER THE
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AGREEMENT WILL GO TO THE AZORES. HE ALSO PRAISED THE GOP NEGOTIATING TEAM CONSISTING OF MILITARY OFFICERS AND A REPRESENTATIVE OF THE REGIONAL GOVERNMENT. HE REPORTED THAT PART WAY THROUGH THE CONVERSATIONS THE FOREIGN MINISTRY WANTED TO PARTICIPATE IN THE CONVERSATIONS BUT WAS OVERRULED BY EANES' OFFICE. MOTA AMARAL FELT THAT THE REGIONAL GOVERNMENT COULD

COUNT ON THE SUPPORT OF PRESIDENT EANES. HE ALSO RECOGNIZED THAT THE FLORES AGREEMENT COULD NOT SERVE AS A PRECEDENT FOR THE LAJES AGREEMENT.

2. REVOLUNTIONARY COUNCIL INTEREST IN THE AZORES: REGIONAL SECRETARY FOR TRANSPORTATION AND TOURISM, PACHECO DE ALMEIDA, TOLD ME IN CONFIDENCE THAT DURING HIS RECENT TRIP TO LISBON HE WAS INVITED TO A REVOLUTIONARY COUNCIL MEETING WHERE HE DESCRIBED THE AZOREAN SITUATION IN DETAIL. ALMEIDA SAID HE TOLD THE COUNCIL THAT IN THE PAST HE HAD ADVOCATED COMPLETE SEPARATION OF THE AZORES FROM PORTUGAL BUT THAT HE HAD NEVER FELT AS PORTUGUESE AS NOW. HE WAS CONFIDENT OF THE FUTURE OF THE AZORES AS A PART OF PORTUGAL. HE SAID THE REVOLUTIONARY COUNCIL INVITATION INDICATED THAT AZOREANS HAD A DIRECT CHANNEL TO PRESIDENT EANES THROUGH THE COUNCIL.

3. LISBON/AZOREAN RELATIONS: THE COUNCIL OF MINISTERS AGREED ON DEC. 13 TO FUND THE REGIONAL GOVERNMENT'S BUDGET DEFICIT. THE EARLIER INDICATION THAT THE GOP WOULD NOT PROVIDE THE MONEY TO COVER THE DEFICIT WAS ONE OF THE PRIMARY REASONS BEHIND MOTA AMARAL'S WELL PUBLICISED SPEECH IN THE REGIONAL ASSEMBLY CALLING THE GOP TO TASK (SEE REFTEL). THE CURRENT BONE OF CONTENTION BETWEEN THE ISLANDS AND THE MAINLAND IS THE DESIRE OF THE GOP TO INCREASE THE FREIGHT RATES ON THE NATIONALIZED SHIPPING LINE WHICH HAS A MONOPOLY BETWEEN THE AZORES AND THE CONTINENT. TWO WEEKS AGO THERE WERE REPORTS THE RATES WOULD DOUBLE AND THIS TRIGGERED CRIES OF PROTEST HERE FROM ALL THE POLITICAL PARTIES, THE REGIONAL GOVERNMENT AND JUST ABOUT EVERY GROUP OF ECONOMIC INTERESTS. THE SECRETARIATE OF STATE FOR MERCHANT MARINE HAS BACKED OFF THAT PROPOSAL, BUT IS REPORTED CONFIDENTIAL

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TO STILL WANT A SUBSTANTIAL RAISE IN FREIGHT RATES. THE REGIONAL GOVERNMENT OPPOSES THIS AND CLAIMS THE FREIGHT RATES BETWEEN THE CONTINENT AND THE AZORES ARE ALREADY HIGHER THAN THOSE BETWEEN ENGLAND AND THE AZORES AND THOSE BETWEEN NORTH AMERICA AND THE AZORES. IN GENERAL, MOTA AMARAL IS OPTOMISTIC THAT WITH THE ELECTIONS OVER, THE NATIONAL AND REGIONAL GOVERNMENTS WILL BE ABLE TO RESOLVE PROBLEMS HARMONIOUSLY. HE ALSO PLANS TO MAKE AN EFFORT TO IMPROVE RELATIONS WITH THE P.S. IN THE AZORES, WHICH SHOULD CONTRIBUTE TO A BETTER CLIMATE BETWEEN THE NATIONAL AND REGIONAL AUTHORITIES.

4. COMMENT: AS SEEN FROM THE AZORES, THE PROBLEM OF THE BUDGET DEFICIT IS AN EXAMPLE OF A PATTERN OF INTERACTION BETWEEN THE REGIONAL AND CENTRAL GOVERNMENTS THAT HAS BEEN FOLLOWED FOR OVER A YEAR. REGIONAL AUTHORITIES MAKE WHAT THEY CONSIDER A REASONABLE REQUEST OF LISBON; THE CENTRAL GOVERNMENT TURNS IT DOWN; AZOREAN LEADERS PROTEST LOUDLY, MAKING A POLITICAL ISSUE OUT OF THE QUESTION. THE SEVERAL WEEKS LATER THE

CENTRAL GOVERNMENT MODIFIES ITS POSITION TO THE SATISFACTION
OF THE AZOREANS.
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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 01 JAN 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: PROGRESS REPORTS, POLITICAL SITUATION, AZORES
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 23 DEC 1976
Decaption Date: 01 JAN 1960
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Authority: ElyME
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 28 MAY 2004
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1976PONTA00507
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: GS
Errors: N/A
Film Number: D760471-0387
From: PONTA DELGADA
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1976/newtext/t19761217/aaaaaobu.tel
Line Count: 118
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Office: ACTION EUR
Original Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 3
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: 77 PONTA DELGADA 473
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Authority: ElyME
Review Comment: n/a
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 23 MAR 2004
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review History: RELEASED <23 MAR 2004 by morefirh>; APPROVED <13 AUG 2004 by ElyME>
Review Markings:

Margaret P. Grafeld
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
04 MAY 2006

Review Media Identifier:
Review Referrals: n/a
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: AZOREAN DEVELOPMENTS
TAGS: PFOR, PINT, PO, FR
To: STATE
Type: TE
Markings: Margaret P. Grafeld Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 04 MAY 2006